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**SOCIAL POLICY\***

**IN**

**WEST AND CENTRAL**

**AFRICA**

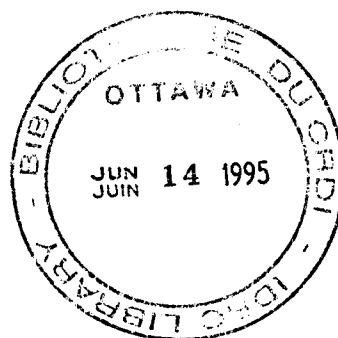
**BY**

**Soumana DOUMBIA**

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\* This is a translated draft and has not been yet reviewed by IDRC Staff.

We therefore apologize for typos and other mistakes.



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## SOCIAL POLICY IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

### INTRODUCTION:

#### **A. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

The priorities of the IDRC Social Policy Program are as follows:

- . To support applied multidisciplinary research (content, planning, implementation, management and results of social policies).
- . The purpose of the program is:
  - to foster innovative political approaches to satisfying basic human needs;
  - to encourage bottom-up solutions to poverty;
  - to promote sustainable development.

To achieve these objectives, IDRC has identified four challenges in social policy formulation:

- globalization;
- changing relations between governments and citizens;
- establishing and maintaining access to social services in urban areas;
- learning how to adapt society and institutions to change.

The foregoing relates to the current context of social reform.

Under this program, the IDRC promotes research which will provide information in the following areas:

- . How?
- . Through which process (mechanism, structure)?
- . By what means?
- . To what extent are they successful (positive results emerging from

decisions and action taken relating to the development, implementation and evaluation of social policy);

. Country reports (planning, implementation, evaluation and results).

The following focal points were selected:

- Planning process;
- Training;
- Implementation;
- Evaluation of social policy decisions.

As part of this extensive Social Policy Program, the IDRC carried out a series of analyses and research in Africa, Latin America and Asia:

- "Le Developpement des capacités institutionnelles en Afrique: Appui Institutionnel en matière de Formation et de Recherche-CRDI-DAKAR 1992" [The development of institutional capabilities in Africa: institutional support for training and research], IDRC, Dakar 1992.

- "La Recherche en Politiques Sociales: Évaluation des Capacités Institutionnelles" [Social policy research: an assessment of institutional capabilities], a report by G. Neill and S. Ouattara, May 1993.

- Research on Social Policy: Proposals for a Future Agenda, Mario Torres, July 1993.

The results of these initiatives greatly contributed to our understanding of the current potential, limitations and problem areas.

To stimulate debate and reflection in this field, the IDRC plans to set up a social policy research network for West and Central Africa. The purpose of this study is to provide the IDRC with a document which will form the basis for discussion during the seminar/workshop.

The document aims to describe contemporary social policy in West and Central Africa by focusing on the issues involved, social policy formulation and implementation and focal points for research.

## **B. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL POLICY:**

According to the various documents provided, social policy refers to areas of activity (other than economic ones) and strategies for providing for the welfare of the population.

In its Social Policy Program, the IDRC describes social policy as:

"the product of political mechanisms and measures designed, planned and applied to respond to basic human needs. Social policy is derived from national and local decisions designed to promote the more efficient development of human resources to meet social and economic changes".

Others define social policy as the actions designed and carried out by government or with government support in order to achieve human development.

Social policy typically includes activities designed to promote the survival of the population, the development of young children, nutrition, all levels of education, understanding, the development of families, prevention, health problems, social security and participation in society. These activities differ from social services which are the instruments of social policy.

Social policy involves both such areas of social activity as education, health, training, the environment, housing, population groups, women, urbanization, etc, and also the mechanisms applied to formulate, develop, plan, implement and evaluate economic and social development programs.

Social policy thus involves the development process which does not appear to occur in a balanced manner and which often pays little heed to the needs and priorities of the population

For want of a better description, we recommend that clarifying and reconciling concepts of social policy be one of the priorities for future research, and that this aspect becomes henceforth a focal point for this research.

### **C. CONSULTANT'S TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

The consultant's task was to prepare an overview document summarizing social policy issues (their formulation and implementation) within the region.

The work involved focusing primarily on the following countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. This task involved:

- analyzing the role of the various levels of government (national, regional, local) and society in formulating and implementing social policy and the way in which the governments and citizens interact;
- to identify the factors influencing social policy formulation and implementation; to place this analysis within the prevailing socioeconomic context and take into account the region's cultural factors;
- to propose an adequate political framework for the development of effective, workable social policies within the region and to specify the role of the various levels of government and of society as a whole in this strategy;
- to propose a variety of potential focal points for research on social policy on West and Central Africa so as to implement the strategies proposed; to propose a series of research topics to illustrate each focal point;
- to determine the human and institutional resources required to carry out a series of research projects in the social policy field, each of which would be national in scope.

This document was to serve as a basis for discussion at the upcoming IDRC seminar/workshop. Work on it was done in October and November 1993.

#### **D. THE APPROACH AND SCOPE OF THE WORK:**

We carried out:

- An analysis of a draft document called "La Recherche en Politiques Sociales.

L'évaluation des capacités Institutionnelles" [Social policy research: an assessment of institutional capabilities], May 1993 and of a document called "Research on Social Policy Proposals For a Future Agenda" July 1993, both of which were provided by the IDRC;

- Research and analysis of documentation from other sources;
- Discussions with certain specialized resource persons and researchers in the social sciences.

We nevertheless had some difficulty finding documents which provided accurate descriptions of contemporary social policy. There are files in existence and, in particular, policy directions in such field as education, health, food self-sufficiency, etc., but these more closely resemble sectoral and technical or economic approaches.

For the purpose of better establishing interesting comparative analyses, it would have been most useful to have carried out research in two or three of the countries selected.

We were surprised to find that a goodly number of the decision makers and senior managers we interviewed lacked a clear concept of the scope of what is meant by "social policy".

In view of the foregoing, we therefore tried to focus the work on:

- analyzing and describing the context, together with its limitations and opportunities;
- social policy issues and research;
- proposed areas for study in this field.

## **I - DISCUSSION OF THE SOCIAL POLICY CONTEXT IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

The framework for this overview was West and Central Africa (Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone), and focused, during its first phase, on eight countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Senegal, encompassing approximately eighty to ninety million people.

### **A - THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POSITION OF THESE COUNTRIES**

In the African context, these countries have played a significant role in the region's history and in its social and political development.

They are active, influential members of such major regional organizations as ECOWAS, [Economic Community of West African States], WAMU [West African Monetary Union] and ICDCS [Permanent Interstate Drought Control Committee for the Sahel] and have carried real economic and political clout, both in Africa and in the international arena.

In the research field, they are the headquarters of many internationally renowned training, research and development institutions: the universities of Abidjan and Dakar, CERPOD [Centre for Study and Research on Population for Development], ENDA [Environment and Development in the Third World], CESAIO [Centre for Economic and Social Studies and Experiments in West Africa], IPD-AOS, INADES-FORMATION [African Institute for Economic and Social Development - Training], IRED [Development Innovation and Networks], WARF [West African Rural Foundation], CRES [Regional Centre for Solar Energy], etc.

This vast region is no stranger to crisis and upheaval, whether of the environmental, economic, social and political sort.



Since the 1970s and 1980s, the world has in fact witnessed a series of severe crises, upheavals and outbreaks of violence, accompanied by a difficult economic recession which has led to profound changes and whose worldwide repercussions include:

- rapid changes in the political environment, involving the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and evolving trends in East-West tensions;
- the emergence of democratic movements and political pluralism;
- the changing role of government;
- an increase in and intensification of world economic interdependence;
- a trend towards regionalization.

All these changes will have a major impact on Africa.

## **B - SOME MAJOR CONSTRAINTS ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **1 - GEOGRAPHIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL:**

We are witnessing the savanization and sahelization of areas that were once wetter and the desertification of sahelian areas, with a concomitant increase in climatic and environmental constraints whose effects include insufficient or irregular rains, or drought or cyclic floods.

We should moreover add to the list all forms of ecological degradation and such other problems as: crickets, pollution or epidemics, famine or food shortages, and, finally, the mass exodus from rural areas, with its severe impact on agro-pastoral productivity.

### **2 - ECONOMIC:**

The countries selected for this overview are less-developed countries whose foreign trade is largely based on a rather antiquated primary sector and a secondary sector that is neither competitive nor highly efficient.

The shortage of adequate infrastructure, combined with the outmoded technical equipment in some fields, means that some of their productive plant is not competitive.

Agriculture, livestock raising and fishing, which provide employment for 60 to 85% of the population and 70 to 80% of GDP, suffer from a shortage of equipment and investment.

The problem of providing support and outlets for the rural economy constitutes a handicap in the capitalization process. Other areas of economic activity, such as industry, trade or crafts, suffer from a shortage of capital, organization and adequate management.

The enclavement of certain (landlocked) countries within the region, which needs to be seen in terms of external imbalances and fundamental economic dependence on the outside world, is compounded by the lack or weakness of the domestic internal and regional markets for the more dynamic countries in the region.

Budgetary constraints at the national and local levels mean that governments have little credibility. Resources have become scarcer with the SAP and austerity programs and a succession of economic, social and political problems (unemployment and underemployment, uncontrolled urban growth and the problem of the homeless; problems related to investment and management; and the continuation of large-scale fraud and influence peddling).

### **Consequences:**

These governments are experiencing a very severe crisis. Albatross-like, they are now incapable of promoting the economic diversification and profound change required for the welfare of their people.

In the international arena, these countries are mired, relegated to the role of specialized producers of raw materials (cocoa, cotton, coffee, peanuts, etc.) within a highly unequal trading system.

Some of these countries have difficulty ensuring food self-sufficiency for their people. The concentration of social services and benefits in urban areas generates a constant exodus towards the cities.

Development policies and programs persist as originally prescribed despite their being poorly designed and badly managed.

Economic growth and stability are becoming idyllic concepts in some countries.

Precarious countries are on their knees, forced to follow the dictates of international institutions.

These African economies are going through a severe crisis caused both by internal and external factors. Although the existence of the crisis is now universally acknowledged, the crisis itself takes many forms and responding to it poses problems. The need for adjustment and change is apparent and essential for all the countries.

While some experts advocate adjustment, coupled with a closer integration of African economies in the world trading system, others suggest that change should occur through the development of endogenous economies with the primary objective of meeting the needs of the local population.

Let us now take a brief look at the responses proposed by the prestigious World Bank. It advocates economic growth based on an increase in output and productivity yet, in reality, we are confronted with "extroverted" growth, ie, growth linked to external demand. The increase in output, beginning with exports, is financed by foreign capital. Although it is true that African countries are short of money, this process has consequences for the medium and long term:

- it entails the risk of ecological problems, especially in agriculture where an increase in cotton or peanut production involves, for example, extending the area of agricultural land and the use of fertilizer and pesticides;

- it would entail an increase in African countries' already heavy debt burden;
- recent experience shows that "extroverted" growth is not synonymous with development.

For example, the "economic miracle" that occurred in Côte d'Ivoire during the 1970s collapsed like a house of cards in the 1980s. What is the explanation for this?

The truth is that, in an underdeveloped and "extroverted" economy, the "tribute" paid to the donors is greater than the amounts of money that flow from them to third countries. Economists now estimate that the financial flows from African countries to developed ones is greater than those from the developed to the developing countries: this precludes any possibility of internal African development based on the World Bank paradigm.

In terms of social policy, the Bank not only proposes self-sustained, sustainable economic growth, which takes ecological (environmental) factors into account, but also equitable economic growth, which, moreover, integrates social justice within the framework of the structural adjustment policy. The Bank suggests education and primary health care be made available to the entire population and that this process, together with regional integration and democratization are prerequisites for development. It is difficult not to endorse these intentions. Yet how can social development be financed when the money is running out? As a result of pressure, especially from Northern NGOs, the World Bank has become a "fervent defender of the social policy aspects of adjustment". Although it even has one division responsible for the social dimensions of adjustment, social policy at the Bank functions as a mere adjunct to adjustment to make it more "gentle" and more "acceptable".

### **3. SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL:**

The international situation, the impact of ill-conceived economic policies and the yoke of structural adjustment policies are partly to blame for the worsening of the severe crisis shaking society in these countries.

Poverty affects virtually the entire population. The silent majority of the disadvantaged, comprising the most vulnerable groups, ie, women, the elderly, children, the rural population and all types of disadvantaged people in the cities, produce some 60 to 80% of the wealth yet remain marginalized, exposed and constantly vulnerable. Most people struggle to survive while a minority wallows in opulence. The illiteracy rate exceeds 50% and can reach 80% among these disadvantaged groups; access to primary health care, security or drinking water still remains limited.

Since governments have become less interventionist in the economy, especially the industrial sector, the private sector does not appear to have formulated any kind of industrial development strategy. Rather we are witnessing massive disinvestment as money moves from productive sectors of the economy into speculative activities.

Economic stagnation, or in some cases, decline, is worsened by external and internal debt and the population explosion makes matters even worse. Africa's population is growing faster than the resources to sustain it. The debt crisis is moreover exacerbated by chaotic management of scarce resources available. This economic situation has an immediate impact on people's lives: the educational, social and health infrastructure and equipment is deteriorating. The level of education has fallen and the traditional training centres have become centres for turning out unemployed workers.

The downsizing of the public service and business closures, combined with mass migration from rural areas for a variety of reasons, has greatly swelled the number of unemployed workers in the cities; and this situation has been accompanied by an increase in violence, security problems, corruption, all sorts of illicit dealings, sickness, begging, etc.

Young people are turning to new forms of delinquent behaviour: prostitution; drugs and alcoholism. In the health care sector, the population's health is deteriorating steadily and AIDS constitutes a serious threat to ill-informed, poorly protected and poorly cared for local population groups (3 to 20% of the region's inhabitants are HIV positive).

The paradox that exists between rapid urban growth, with large numbers of homeless people and unhealthy, poverty-ridden ghettos and the dramatic decline in public services makes for a potentially explosive situation.

Overextended governments attempt to disengage themselves from a catastrophic situation without first laying any of the groundwork; public services are highly inadequate, relative to people's enormous expectations.

This situation has led to a crisis of confidence and authority in governments and their institutions, aggravated by bureaucratic red tape.

The political situation has not always allowed initiatives to spring forth, nor has it permitted citizens to participate in managing their affairs. One-party governments are the rule. There is neither freedom of expression, freedom of the press nor freedom of opinion. Dialogue is virtually non-existent and power is concentrated in the hands of a ruling class whose members are not much concerned about dialogue and concerted action with other social partners.

As a result of the political upheaval in Eastern Europe and popular movements in various African countries, the current political situation in Africa can be sketched as follows:

- the emergence in some countries, particularly French-speaking ones, of "democratic" constitutional governments with new constitutions which recognize democratic rights or the existence of draft constitutions providing some measure of political freedom:

West and Central Africa;

- the existence of "internal liberation" movements which claim to represent a democratic alternative to dictatorships: Horn of Africa and East Africa;

- inexorable democratization in Southern Africa, with the slow but sure demise of apartheid In South Africa;

- the spread of the human rights movement, as evidenced by the founding of human rights associations or movements, etc.

Notwithstanding the indisputable progress of democracy, we must admit that the trend towards democracy in Africa has very little or only very superficial impact on the mostly "poor" and "illiterate" rural population, even if voices are occasionally heard calling for the "voice of the voiceless"--the peasants--to be heard. The rural population is in demand mostly to vote for the urban elite wanting to accede to power. We should, moreover, acknowledge that the current democratization process only worsens Africa's main problems; for example, it fails to give enough weight to women. In saying this, we are not trying to be politically correct, but reality forces us to recognize that our society suffers from serious imbalances between its male and female elements. This is not the only one! Despite the decisive participation of young people in movements for social change, they and their problems (education, employment) are not addressed in any decisive, forward-looking way. Such fundamental, vital issues as chronic food shortages, structural unemployment, the steadily deteriorating environmental quality of life, Africa's economic marginalization, etc. are not given a proper hearing (when they are not simply shelved) under the new ways of political thinking. Massive human rights violations continue to occur in some countries despite their self-proclaimed democratization.

We are thus witnessing a social and political dynamic which is essentially "urban", "male", elitist and inspired by foreign ideology. Most of the parties are in fact predominantly urban in origin (except for guerrilla movements organized by political/military fronts) and especially in capitals. They are thus dominated by urban males whose primary concern is to control the levers of power. Despite its role of forming the basis for democracy, the concept of a "political party" still does not appear to be sufficiently developed to express and represent the interests of the majority of ordinary people.

The current cultural vacuum encourages young people to emulate western values.

Other people take refuge in religion and all its manifestations, including religious fundamentalism.

The democratization process remains fragile, alternating precariously between lurching progress and repression.

These problems and restrictions, whatever their form, nevertheless do not exclude the possibility of the development and flowering of many opportunities and initiatives for harmonious, participatory social and economic development.

### **C - THE SPECTRUM OF CURRENT INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

There is now a real awareness on the part of governments, society and organizations, of ecological risks and environmental deterioration in the wake of the recent series of droughts. As a result, many natural resource management and conservation programs have been created and the issue of the environment and development has leapt to the forefront. The ICDCS and other networks are making this the major focus of their concerns.

- The manifest desire on the part of the political leadership to do away with border obstacles and to expand the geographic and economic trading space for goods and the free movement of people.
- The numerous groupings based on common interests through organizations such as SRDA, Liptako-gourma, ECA, ECOWAS, WAMU, CACEU, etc, are positive factors, notwithstanding the limitations of some organizations. Hence the initiatives designed to expand these groupings. The example of the European Union increasingly inspires the political leadership to unite in a common effort to resist and confront international pressures.

There is today social and political space enough for all sorts of initiatives.

Since the Arusha Conference, the participation of the people is an acknowledged factor in certain practices.



Society and its citizens are acutely aware of their strengths and capabilities; they are on the move, organizing and defending their interests, while insisting on their right to know and to participate in the management of the country.

The will to act unquestionably exists, and is reflected in the words, and frequently in the deeds, of the national authorities and governments, if we look at the thrust of initiatives with regard to the environment, decentralization, solidarity, etc.

The state is disengaging and encouraging private initiative. Economic liberalism and the free play of market forces are the order of the day. The new openness has become a reality in social, economic and political fields. Some steps have already been taken to improve the management of government, programs and projects.

Favourable tax legislation and facilities have been adopted to develop employment, investment and the private sector.

After 20 to 30 years of deprivation, the enormous human potential--dynamic, motivated and entrepreneurial--is finding ever more opportunities to develop the enormous potential of irrigated agriculture, with a view to opening up a market of over 80 million people.

The process of democratization is continuing its inexorable progress, notwithstanding a number of obstacles and difficulties, and the rule of law is establishing itself at a pace appropriate to individual countries.

Democratic, individual and collective freedoms are becoming consolidated, with the gradual clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Social and professional associations are springing up and occupying the political, economic and social space. Political parties are organizing enthusiastically to assume power or play a role in opposition.

Elements already exist of alternative centres of power. Pressure groups are emerging and gaining strength. Numerous mechanisms and facilities exist in socioeconomic and political fields, namely:

- The creation of institutions and structures to improve and expedite administrative procedures; to involve and support society and the initiatives.
- The creation of technical departments and agencies responsible for specific areas of society (Ministry of Health and Solidarity, Social Action Fund, Basic Education, art and culture, city planning and housing, environment, etc).
- The establishment of mechanisms and structures to promote political and administrative decentralization, with decentralized communities, as in Mali and Guinea.
- Freedom of the press and communications is developing (there are now 5 to 20 daily or weekly newspapers; 2 to 10 free rural, private radio stations, depending on the country).
- The development of dialogue, regular consultations and attendance by representatives of associations, NGOs, the private sector and society at large in discussions on the major problems facing the country.

The repercussions of this "renaissance", based on the rediscovery of certain fundamental freedoms, is reflected in the flowering of art, literature, theatre, film, music, painting, which musters with a critical eye this society in the throes of ultra-rapid change.

Increasingly, in a sectoral approach, attention is focused, in terms of reflection, political will and action, and even programs, on:

- The deprived, the disadvantaged, the poor;
- Illiteracy and literacy programs;

- Basic education, school drop-outs and education for girls;
- Unemployment and youth employment;
- Freedom of the press and communications;
- The role of theatre in education;
- Housing, pollution abatement and the environment;
- Health education and population control.

As far as institutions are concerned, we have the following consultative fora and international conferences to exchange experience, harmonize approaches and adopt strategies and guidelines:

- AMCHE;
- ROCARE, recently;
- Natural Resource Management;
- The emergence of national, regional and international human rights and lawyers' associations;
- Meetings of parliamentarians;
- AFAO, the organization of women entrepreneurs, etc.

The opportunities focus on the international, economic and political space created since the 1980s, which has become increasingly dynamic in the course of the 1990s.

Players at all levels are participating in a wide range of opportunities and initiatives.

We note the commitment on the part of governments and donors to orienting and supporting these initiatives. One key feature is the input into the dynamics of this process provided by local associations, communities and private organizations, such as:

- The Consumers Association, which in all countries of the region is worried about the quality and price of products;

- The development of elementary schools in certain countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and recently Mali, is a valuable resource in increasing education rates;
- The birth of numerous associations of young graduates for slum clearance in urban centres.

NGOs constitute an essential, pragmatic link in the proliferation of these initiatives through their series of economic but also--most importantly--social projects, in light of their humanitarian and philanthropic approach. They are involved in numerous areas, such as health, education, slum clearance, the handicapped and training.

### **NEW PROSPECTS AND THE COURSE OF CHANGE**

These are reflected in:

- The awareness that governments' dependence on foreign aid has become excessive. Aid may be an important supplement to local efforts. The input of competent local individuals (elected representatives, scientists, intellectuals and representatives of grassroots organizations) in examining aid proposals constitutes progress.
- Scientific and intellectual skills are universally acknowledged qualities. The goal is to mobilize human resources for the benefit of all through a policy of regional exchanges and cooperation.
- The emergence of an unambiguous realization that certain problems are multinational in nature and that the solutions to them are beyond the grasp of individual countries in isolation. Problems in this category include the environment, human rights, etc.

- There is a strong current in the region which demands that new development strategies be formulated to allow all citizens to make a significant contribution to both their own development and to that of the nation.
- The recognition that, notwithstanding the extent and multiple dimensions of the crisis, the ultimate objective is a social transformation which goes beyond individual policies.
- The decentralization and consolidation of local governments.

#### **D - ISSUES IN SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH**

An examination of the context and the socioeconomic and political environment, in Africa and internationally, highlights the following circumstances:

West and Central Africa have in recent decades undergone profound change, ushered in by a multiplicity of factors, both internal and external to Africa. These include the introduction of political pluralism, the establishment of structural adjustment policies resulting in greater liberalization of internal markets, the debt burden, galloping population growth, an accelerated urbanization process and increased desertification, etc. The impact of this combination of factors has been to change considerably the role and function of governments within the borders of each country. The impact of the globalization process has resulted in a reduction of the financial and political ability of African governments to implement their national policies. Social policy is one area of government action which has been particularly affected by these changes: many areas which traditionally fell within the purview of central governments have passed to the responsibility of local communities and the private sector. This decentralization, which has not necessarily been accompanied by adequate financial resources, frequently has the effect of wiping out governments' national social policies, without replacing them by other, more decentralized ones.

This decentralization process and its impact has already given rise to numerous economic studies. Nonetheless, the social policy field has not hitherto systematically held the attention of researchers in the region, due to the limited number of social policy research institutions, and the relatively low capabilities of the ones that do exist.

It should also be noted that we are witnessing a shift in the paradigm for analyzing development. Until recently, the dominant paradigm regarded the economy as an independent entity, whose mechanisms could and should be solely responsible for determining all other dimensions of society. This view is being increasingly called into question today, in the wake of the global failure of development strategies based on economic factors alone, and in particular on the policies of structural adjustment. The idea has gained increasing acceptance that the purpose of development--improving the living conditions of the inhabitants and in particular the most disadvantaged--is not determined exclusively by economic factors but also by political and social ones. One of the challenges is to integrate social and economic policies in such a way as to establish a balanced process of development, which takes the priorities of the population into account.

The issue can be viewed from certain other key perspectives, which need to be set out here, one of which is the need to rethink development policies. To this we must add:

- The level of understanding (without exaggeration and ambiguity) and knowledge of politicians, leaders, decision-makers and planners of the concept of Social Policies and the actions which support it.
- The key question is (without wishing to cause offence): are there social policies? Global or sectoral? Designed and formulated at what level and how?
- The importance assigned by the planners to the technical/economic approach to development, in relation to human development aspects.

The object of the exercise is to identify the problems associated with these approaches to development and planning, and the factors which determine their progress and effectiveness.

The object today is to determine how these countries, governments and organizations decide on the orientation and implementation of their development policies.

We feel that, in order to achieve development objectives which are harmonious and balanced in economic and social terms, the emphasis must henceforth be placed on human development, ie, a concept of development that focuses on people and not on institutions, and which has the following priorities and objectives:

- To relieve misery and poverty;
- To ensure that the disadvantaged have equal access to security of food supplies, education, health care, training and other social services; a social safety net which reflects the citizen's individual rights.

There can be no genuine human development or individual well-being side-by-side with poverty (affecting 50% to 80% of the population), unemployment and inequality, where a sizeable proportion of the population is unable to meet its basic needs in terms of health care, education, employment, housing and recreation, and which suffers from a lack of the equipment and economic support needed for survival.

The real issue concerns the social dimensions of development in general and, more specifically, the social dimension of development projects and programs and their planning.

We need to ensure that the planning machinery exploits and uses all existing resources in formulating social policies and strategies.

This all requires a process of reflection on the mechanisms involved in strengthening and utilizing skills. Human and institutional capabilities are the determining factor in achieving the objective of socioeconomic development. These capabilities are essential to understanding and managing actions, as well as a more effective early warning and response to national and international challenges.

Hence the importance of research, and especially of experimental research, in improving programs. In other words: how can we develop and strengthen the role of social policy research in policy formulation and implementation.

One dramatic finding is the existence of numerous skills and institutions involved in social policy research in the region, and their exclusion from the planning process.

## **II - THE ENVIRONMENT AS A MODEL**

The purpose of this section is simply to list a number of issues and areas of concern to all the governments involved, where the approach to the issues causes problems, notwithstanding the stated political will.

The most important finding is the emergence of a trend on the part of decision-makers and planners to move from intention to implementation.

How does this take place in practice? What mechanisms are involved and what stage have we reached?

Attention and a variety of experiments are focused on numerous fields, including the environment, education, decentralization, health, etc.



### **A case study: the environment**

Although natural resources and the issue of the environment are long-standing concerns, they are currently fashionable because of the deterioration of the natural heritage, of which the world became aware at the time of UNCED, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

In the region of concern to us here, such major trends as population pressures, uncontrolled resource exploitation, climatic crises and long droughts, resource degradation and desertification have profound environmental implications. Each country is attempting to address the issue. The situation can be summarized as follows:

- Governments have adopted a number of awareness-promotion strategies and sectoral programs:
  - . Greenbelt initiatives, Tree Days, etc;
  - . Improved ovens;
  - . Natural resource and land use management programs, such as the PNGTV in Burkina Faso and PGRN in Mali.
- Local people and communities have unquestionably assimilated certain techniques for the restoration and conservation of nature, albeit haphazardly, into their daily practices: combatting brush fires; erecting fences to keep animals out; anti-erosion dykes and bunds, agro-forestry, village woodlots, etc.
- NGOs are very active in this sector in terms of awareness-promotion, and educational initiatives and a variety of microprojects (CHE).
- Major international, bilateral and multilateral institutions are also involved.

The FAO, GTZ, CIDA, etc, are supporting major government projects in the area of natural resource management.

UNPD, through its Network Africa 2000 program is involved via NGOs and grass-roots associations in microprojects for training, environmental protection, and development.

The ICDCS initiated the Sahelian education program in 1986 and the environmental training program in 1990.

While the environment is the basis of and the framework for any sustainable development, it cannot be reduced merely to its technical dimension, but also--and primarily--embraces political and social aspects.

The research institutions at this level echo the concerns of governments. This is how the idea arose to establish a faculty of natural and environmental sciences at the University of Abidjan. Other institutions, such as CERPOD, UAPS, the Sahel Institute and IRSSH have all expressed a desire to embark on projects in this field.

In all cases, the state of research is characterized by the existence of a mass of ecological, agricultural and population data in each country, sufficient to gain an overview of natural resources deposits and implement sound environmental policies. Similarly, the famine early warning systems, the monitoring mechanisms and observatories, and the research elements of numerous rural programs, both bilateral, private or public sector, constitute important sources of environmental data when viewed in isolation.

Lastly, speeches and writings by decision-makers, researchers and planners justify and praise the multidisciplinary or integrated approach to the environmental issue.

It would be eminently desirable if the initiative of the ICDCS, through its environmental education program, would form a genuine scientific and educational framework for intervention

on a national scale in the region, and will be conducive to a genuine regional synergy, with a shared regional vision, involving partners (governments, village associations, NGOs, private operators, financial partners and parents and students).

The example of the environment shows that everyone is doing something, somewhere. The wheel is being invented and reinvented a thousandfold. Valuable initiatives and experiments exist, but they are unknown and underutilized.

The problem is how to share the knowledge and experience gained between the various levels involved, and how to organize a broad-based approach to involvement in the formulation of a coherent environmental and development policy, which will combine preventive and remedial aspects.

At the conclusion of a workshop which we had the honour of leading on the development of the village land use management plan (PATV), which brought together the individuals involved in 11 projects in Mali, we had an opportunity to obtain the participation of the Regional Director of the ICDCS as a resource person. The situation in the five countries (Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Niger and Chad) is as follows:

There is no existing research which presents an overview of the experiments and the lessons to be drawn. The finding is that some countries have opted for land management plans on a national basis, others for regional development plans, and others for plans on a local level.

The conclusions were that, in practical terms for land use planning and management, the formulation of plans adheres to five principles with key strategic approaches:

- Participation;
- Global approach;
- Sustainability;
- Feasibility;

- Responsibility.

The methodological approaches encourage consultation and involvement of local inhabitants at all levels.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both in the area of the environment and the management of natural resources, and in basic education, we find that a degree of role sharing is taking place between the government and society at large. This sharing is occurring as a result of circumstances, without prior consultation. In some cases there is complementarity, support and cooperation, while in other cases there is still only a lack of understanding.

## **III- RESULTS OF ANALYSIS**

### **1 - The role of the various levels**

Our analysis started off from the following observation:

Social policy constitutes the sum total of measures and actions taken by the authorities (government) to improve the living conditions of the people.

It involves aspects of principle, tactical and strategic aspects, and methodological aspects for their implementation.

This example is generally listed in the initiatives reflected in annual, biennial, triennial or quinquennial plans and programs.

Social action is involved as complementary elements, or rather accompanying elements, of a whole battery of technical and economic measures and thrusts.

The social actions or fields which are the focus of attention in these plans and initiatives concern:

- Education (traditional and literacy) and training;
- Health;
- Information - communications;
- Urbanization;
- Social issues (prevention, retirement, sickness, old age, etc).

Some areas, such as:

- . Housing and urban development;
- . Unemployment and the poor;
- . Population growth;
- . Women

merit no more than short paragraphs in the plans and programs.

We find a lack of consistency, except for general considerations, even though in some cases there are ministries or technical departments responsible. This is the case for the status of women, or urban development and housing.

Areas such as the poor, population growth, civic and moral education, recreation, religious affairs and children are merely cited.

Lastly, there are "priority themes" such as basic education, environment, decentralization, participation in grassroots development, and solidarity, which are the focus of international support and which are increasingly integrated as policy aspects.

Programs are implemented at every level, from local communities, to regional and national and involve a wide range of players:

- Governments and their technical departments;
- Bilateral and multilateral institutions;
- Donors;
- NGOs;
- Citizens' organizations and associations;
- Local municipalities (communes);
- Private institutions (research agencies or companies);
- Several research and training institutions.

In terms of program formulation, a distinction must be drawn between:

- The process of development of plans and projects on a national scale, which takes place in consultation with other departments.
- The process of local project development, which occurs on a sectoral basis.
- The micro-implementation style of project.

Planning is invariably imposed from the top down, notwithstanding the assertion of the principles of participation and decentralization.

The majority of countries have a document which sets out the methodology for developing regional and local development programs. The fact that these methodologies are no exception to the concept of centralization current in the departments, is apparent from their content:

- The thrust of decentralized planning;

- The integration of national and regional planning;
- Mechanisms for regional and local programming;
- The funding system for decentralized planning.

The real problem lies in the involvement of the local population in the program formulation and planning stages.

## 2 - **Institutional capabilities**

We would here refer the reader to the conclusions of the study by G Neill and S Ouattara, "Evaluation des Capacités institutionnelles dans le domaine de la Recherche en politiques sociales" [Evaluation of institutional capabilities in the field of social policy research].

According to the authors, the criteria of efficiency used in evaluating institutions focus on the management method, human resources, financial resources, type of funding, research program and dissemination methods.

It would appear that some eminently capable, self-sufficient institutions do exist, such as NISER, CERPOD, CODESRIA, IFTDR, which have emerged as the partners of choice in terms of strengthening institutional research capabilities.

Others, such as ISSER and CEDRES, have some key assets, but require sustained institutional support.

All these institutions have access to qualified and frequently experienced human resources.

Other sub-regional institutions, such as REMUAO, ROCARE, ICDCS and WARF can serve as sources of inspiration and also participate in future initiatives.

The aim must be to find a mechanism for making use of these capabilities by strengthening them, providing them with political and financial support and involving them in research and policy formulation.

### **3 - Redefinition of the political framework for the development of social policy**

The prerequisite for the political framework is the recognition of the value of creating a social policy network and the services which it can provide. If we consider that this network can serve as a first-rate tool for consultation, exchange and review of local and regional experience and skills in the process of formulating and planning economic and social policies, it is important that politically the idea be supported by governments and countries, by researchers, and above all, by financial partners and partners in development.

It is also important that the structure not be viewed as an instrument for intervention or disruption, but one which serves as a facilitator and catalyst.

On the strength of this political support on the part of decision-makers, the network will become a genuine tool for enriching governments in the area of policy formulation. The reorganization of the political and economic space of West and Central Africa is already a major milestone.

The redefinition of the political framework for the development of social policies accordingly poses the problem of how:

- To define the framework and types of cooperation between social policy research and the decision-makers in each country;
- To improve contacts and cooperative relationships;
- To improve the communication and management of information;
- To define the role of the players involved at various levels.



The redefinition will also result in an enhancement, and even a correction, of the current state of relationships of cooperation and complementarity between the various players: how to establish and energize the principle of mutual involvement and consultation at all levels, cooperation of all decision-makers, planners, donors and social policy researchers.

How can a pragmatic link be forged between the local and national levels and between the national and regional levels.

It is vital that, from the prospective of the change or readjustment of the role of the state in relationship to society, the principles and mechanisms of accessibility and consultation be better organized.

To achieve this, we believe that there are two priority levels.

a) - **The national level**

Institution of a triennial forum for exchange and orientation. The aim will be to bring together representatives of the various levels and players to:

- Review the state of the institutions and collate all existing experience and methods with regard to social policy;
- Exchange and arrive at a consensus on the major thrusts of methods, process and content in the development of social policies;
- Undertake dissemination of information on a large scale;.
- Follow up;
- Organize a meeting for review and programming purposes.

With the help of the process of decentralization and participation, local and private sector concerns will be integrated into these meetings, the results of which will be made available to

users (decisions-makers, planners and donors) as well as being exchanged throughout the network and throughout the region.

We must acknowledge that the primary problem of the structure of facilitation/coordination may arise. For this we would recommend that an experienced resource person, skilled in interpersonal relations (*marketing oblige*) could start out by mobilizing institutions and departments by means of workshops.

Where necessary in light of national needs, these workshops may consist of decentralized meetings in the regions. The other alternative is to select a resource person attached to an institution. It is important that the national level should have sufficient room to manoeuvre in selecting its own mechanisms for mobilization and effective participation, so it can be the real interlocutor of the network in terms of representivity, legitimacy, and effectiveness.

Concretely, there is a need to specify the role and function of the various levels of government and of society at large.

Research and consultation at the local and/or decentralized community level, such as municipalities, neighbourhoods, villages or districts, provide a means of gathering the experiences of organizations and associations in the area of initiatives and solidarity, and including them in reports and even in ongoing experiments.

The various levels of government (national, regional and local) must play a facilitative role and develop dialogue and consultation to diagnose, gather data and bring together the various players in the process of analysis and defining priorities for policy formulation.

NGOs and the private sector must be more involved.

The aim will be to develop mechanisms for participatory action and research: this will undoubtedly provide a niche for the involvement of researchers and institutions.

**b) - At the Regional level: (West and Central Africa)**

The aim will be to establish the headquarters of the network in one of the member states, where contacts, access and communications are easy, but also where a certain research capability exists in the field of social policy.

The network Coordinator/Facilitator will be responsible for participating in and supporting the national network in organizing orientation and review workshops.

The Coordinator/Facilitator will organize network meetings once or twice a year to systematize the exchange process, organize reviews and define thrusts and programs in cooperation with other national teams.

Through the Coordinator, the network will develop cooperation with a variety of institutions engaged in social policy research and support, both regionally and internationally.

He will ensure follow-up on approved thrusts and programs.

**4 - Proposed starting points**

Our analysis of bottlenecks in current practices highlights a number of fields and issues which are generally regarded as priority concerns.

There is a need to revise or readjust the content of programs in the area of human development.

Human development poses the problem of reestablishing a balance between two technical/economic and socioeconomic options or points of view. In all cases, the crucial question is the just and equitable redistribution of real well-being, ie, equal access to health care, education and the benefits of growth.

- a) - It is vital that one of the first and primary starting points have to do with the **content and perception of "social policy"**.

This analysis should be based on the following elements:

- The state is in crisis in Africa and is searching for honourable alternatives;
- Opportunities waiting to be exploited;
- How to reduce dependence on aid;
- The development of a program of national and *regional* policy;
- Redefinition of national sovereignty;
- Sustainable, equitable development;
- The limits to the use of power;
- The consolidation of local government;
- Strengthening society;
- Strengthening respect for the law;
- The rationalization of state-owned property;
- Flexible policies and relations with NGOs in the private sector;
- Strengthening and enhancing grassroots participation.

An analysis of these topics using the grid: obstacles, new perspectives and avenues for change, will be useful to an understanding of the concept of social policies.

- b) - **Democratization, decentralization and participation**

These terms are leitmotifs and reflect circumstances and trends which are relatively healthy throughout our region. We feel that a sound democratic process implies alternation, respect for the individual, respect for the law and participation.

These terms are interpreted and assimilated for a variety of reasons. It is vital here that research focus on participation in all its aspects, namely:

- What participation (in planning)?
- Who participates (indirect or collective, local elite, representatives of government and ministries, representatives of NGOs and foreign organizations)?
- How to participate (basic structure, forms, organization of content, rationale and interest involved).
- What are the contextual elements which influence the nature of participation?
- Analysis of participation in the decentralization process.
- Analysis of participation in the democratization process.

Grassroots associations and organizations of workers, women and young people, together with professional associations, have suffered from limitations on the right to free expression. This has, among other factors, limited their participation.

A commitment is needed to achieving the participation of the entire population, empowering it and asserting the principle of accountability.

### **RESEARCH CAN ALSO FOCUS ON**

- . The roles of society and local organizations in relation to local national government structures in the context of projects and program development, planning and financing.
- . How does the local population view social policy? How does it practice it? What are the mechanisms involved.
- . How can the social mechanisms be used to enable the population to participate in formulating initiatives?

c) - **The rule of law, civic education, learning citizenship**

**Democratization as a factor in social stability**

It is acknowledged today that the systematic learning of democracy provides the best defence against anarchy and the claims of religious fundamentalism to be the only structure and mitigates the shattering of the people's dreams. Citizens can and must be aware of their rights and obligations. They can and must be informed and consulted. They can and must decide for themselves and exert control over political society. This is also the price to be paid for avoiding more "lost decades", as it is undeniably true that the shortcomings and the economic disaster of Africa today cannot be dissociated from the exclusion of target groups from the choice of what is being proposed for them.

It is therefore necessary to popularize the rights and duties of the citizen: to engage in the learning of citizenship. The aim is to analyze how society (3/4 of which are illiterate peasants) can make the process of democratization. This requires vigorous action to popularize civic education. Research will focus on both content and concept: language and issues; how to protect rural dwellers through legal aid; what mechanisms can be used for observation and follow-up to ensure that the citizen monitors and controls the administration.

How to insert legal aspects into school curricula (legal affairs, civic education and sectoral policies).

d) - **Solidarity**

This is a term frequently used by decision-makers and politicians. It would appear that its resurgence goes hand-in-hand with the depth of the current economic and social crisis.

Research must focus on cultural and traditional mechanisms of solidarity and their application in the current context.

It is important to identify elements of the African contribution to social policy research by means of studies on the foundation of this solidarity, eg:

- Cultural and traditional mechanisms and practices;
- Community identity;
- Family and community values;

which are both community networks and forms of survival. These are key aspects in the treatment of society's failures, as social security cannot provide a safety net for everyone. In this regard, Africa's input can make a contribution to Western thought.

Research at the local level will focus on the role and function of solidarity, but also on avenues to be explored at the national and international level.

Is solidarity a form of conscious participation by the population to share the risk, a form of struggle or a disavowal of injustice?

Can solidarity be regarded as a tool for self-advancement which can replace aid?

e) - **Information and communications systems**

The information exists: the problem is its accessibility.

The requirement is to make it known, to process it and disseminate it.

The need is to identify valid sources of information, to find appropriate mechanisms for processing it and making it available to those who need it.

Research has made great strides at all levels; research initiatives, the findings of diagnoses and assessments, which benefit no one because of the failure to process and disseminate them.

How can we improve the quality and performance of the local press and private radio?  
How can we advance education and development through the media?

**f) - Regional integration**

This is becoming essential to survival. It may be horizontal or vertical. It is important to consider that a growing number of the problems facing these countries are political and economic problems with multinational dimensions. This is true of environmental problems, human rights problems, health care problems, etc.

It is vital that regional cooperation be encouraged to achieve efficient use of shared resources (rivers, lakes, trade) and the harmonization of technical resources.

Research topics need to target the social and cultural dynamics of this integration. They can focus on:

- How to help lower barriers between researchers, governments, regional institutions, decision-makers and citizens and persuade everyone to coalesce around activities conducive to regional integration.
- How can progress to date be measured, using a global, multi-disciplinary approach; how can factors or groups working for or against integration be identified?
- What institutions should be promoted and what independence do they have with regard to national policies?
- How can we develop and promote exchange of the analysis of existing achievements, information and knowledge and avoid reinventing the wheel in a variety of fields?



- How can we develop cooperation and communication in the field of research and documentation?
- How can we persuade donors to espouse the integration option and make them participate in it?
- What are effective mechanisms for promoting cooperation and articulating complementarity between countries?
- How can social policy research be integrated into the planning process?
- What are existing or potential mechanisms for assessing the results of social policy research, using it and following it up in the development process?
- Knowledge and assessment of the experience of research initiatives in the private sector, NGOs and grassroots communities, eg, in the fields of environment and natural resource planning and management.
- What link exists between research initiatives and decentralization?

**g) - Social policy research**

A misunderstanding exists about the findings of social policy research, which are accordingly underused.

Social policy research in Africa has broken down. Consideration needs to be given to:

- The environment for social science and social policy research;
- Priority areas in social policy;

- How to enhance the role of social policy research in the formulation and implementation of national policies;
- Knowledge of national and regional achievements in social policy research;
- Comparative analysis;
- How to revitalize institutional cooperation;
- Harmonization or adoption of joint strategies.

Eg: CERPOD, ICDCS, WHO, FNUAP, UNICEF, IDRC, CIFAD, ISFRA, etc, in terms of exchanges.

- How can the organization and management of social policy research be supported?

#### **h) - Training, retraining, and development for researchers**

During the past 20 years, Africa has experienced a particularly unfavourable economic climate, and most of the ensuing crises have been exacerbated by its slowness to respond. This poses the problem of the involvement of researchers in analysis and futurological research. This fact is buttressed by the following findings:

- The brain drain;
- The problem of the distribution of skills which exacerbates the problem of local administrative management (as a result of centralism);
- The climate of distrust, competition and jealousy, linked to certain exclusion factors, have erected obstacles to local professionalism or the use of skills;
- Foreign technical assistance was in most cases imposed from above and badly received; it accordingly behaved as a destructive force, instead of being a means of reinforcement.

So how can we provide local experts, researchers and resource persons with support and credibility?

**The central concern is improving the quality of human resources**

It is important to find mechanisms that will make it possible to:

- Restore confidence in our serious managers and researchers;
- Reinforce their capabilities and skills.

In addition to political support, the solutions are to be found in training, development and retraining, not to mention ways to upgrade these skills.

- Training, retraining and development for planners, managers and practioners in the realm of social policy.
- Support for the identification of key institutions that can serve as a basis for training and retraining civil servants, managers and researchers.
- The creation of a powerful, enthusiastic regional academic community with the capability to cooperate.
- The training and retraining of social policy researchers in modern procedures and practices, including:
  - . Research;
  - . Description and analysis;
  - . Training in approaches, refining and upgrading techniques and methods;
  - . Interpretation and formulation of proposals;
  - . Translating the findings into language that is accessible to users and the people;
  - . How to make use of and assimilate the people's knowledge.

i) - **The environment**

The environment is the basis and framework for sustainable development. It cannot be reduced merely to its technical dimension, but also--and above all--comprises political and social aspects. Projects and programs must therefore take into account the representational systems which communities have developed for dealing with the environment and resource utilization.

- The problems of the degradation of the Sahel environment are not recent.
- "Modern" techniques which aim to intensify agricultural production (the green revolution) linked to increased use of foreign inputs (chemical fertilizers, animal traction) have not often been incorporated into agro-ecological agriculture in large parts of Africa.
- Traditional peasant methods for restoring soil fertility (such as manure) and natural resource management are no longer adequate or appropriate for current changing conditions in the Sahel.
- Households which have little land (the poor suffer most from the impact of the process of degradation. Often they have no other choice than to overexploit the land).
- The process of environmental degradation has a number of structural causes:
  - \* **Economic:** the deterioration in the terms of trade or the peasants' agricultural output in relation to imported products.
  - \* **Political and social:** The traditional systems of natural resource management have been abolished, population pressures, an inappropriate system of research and popular education.

- \* **Climatological change:** decreasing rainfall, drought and the limited ability of the inhabitants to deal with the crises caused by climatic change.

There are undoubtedly many African initiatives in the area of environmental protection and restoration.

It is important to assess the current environmental situation, the impact of projects and programs on the environment and economic development.

Nevertheless, the environmental problem is not confined to physical and technical aspects alone. We know that the effectiveness of any social policy depends on the environment into which it is inserted:

- The political environment: democratization and participation.
- The economic environment: sound management and transparency in government, with a citizens' watching brief.
- The sociocultural environment: the empowerment of the people, the development of motivated, dynamic grassroots and private sector associations committed to involvement in the management of affairs at all levels.
- The technical and administrative environment: a supporting, facilitative role with appropriate tools.
- The environment in relationships based on aid and cooperation; limitation of the role of donors; establishment of a partnership based on awareness and genuine mutual respect.

In addressing the problem of the environment in its various dimensions, researchers must explore strategies and means for organizing at community, district, national and sub-regional levels.

Analysis has shown that the contemporary reality of the Sahel is highly complex. Any effective strategy must consider not only agro-technical economic and ecological criteria, but also socioeconomic, cultural and institutional aspects.

For example, the lessons drawn from many experiments reveal that sustainable development is impossible without the help of the local population.

But unless and until the peasants themselves become aware of environmental issues, they will not change their practices. And changing these practices requires effective local organization and a participatory approach to intervention. In this context, special attention must be paid to women, in view of their often crucial role in production.

## **CONCLUSION**

In addition to the issues set out above, there are other possible starting points, such as:

- Comparative research in the changing roles of states and governments in the new world order.
- The policies of macro-economic adjustment and social sectors.
- The importance of decentralization, privatization, and empowerment (the assumption of responsibility for ones own destiny).

- The efficiency/effectiveness of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of existing social policies.
- A genuine partnership.

## **5 - PROPOSALS FOR METHODOLOGY AND COOPERATION**

Our diagnosis of the process of social policy formulation and planning highlights the extent to which research institutions and researchers have been overlooked; the lack of importance allocated to the existing large body of findings and experiments, the lack of consultation and concertation between players, society at large, NGOs and the private sector.

In order to remedy the situation, we feel that we must draw on the experience and achievements of the applied sciences, in this case agronomic research, and the Arusha experiment in popular participation in development.

In the case of agronomic research, an interesting chain of exchanges and analysis has emerged, from the starting point of topic-related research initiatives.

### **THE EXAMPLE OF MALI**

At the Agriculture Department at the Institute of Rural Economy (IER) dialogue and exchanges are continuing via research centres, research stations, experimental farms, pilot peasant and peasant volunteers on the ground; research by means of experimentation. Progress is reviewed from time to time at the local, regional and national levels, involving all the players. The process of consultation and exchange is continuing with the countries in the region.

This process, which incorporates the peasants' knowledge by means of a constant interaction, is moving towards orienting agricultural policy in terms of the area studied.

## **THE EXAMPLE OF ARUSHA**

The example of the Arusha conference provides a good example of popular participation in development.

This conference, which was initiated by the OAU/ECA in February 1990, had the merit of bringing together political and financial decision-makers (representatives of governments, and bilateral and multilateral organizations and institutions), researchers and research institutions, NGOs, grassroots organizations and socio-professional associations, young people, women, etc to clearly address the issue of participation and discuss obstacles and possible solutions. The force of the argument convinced the conference to take a position and make some firm political decisions regarding popular participation.

"That all development programs and policy plans necessarily involve the population and use participatory methods". The message was clearly passed on and the participants at national government level embraced it wholeheartedly. Without claiming to evaluate the results, we can say that everyone has made it a concern, even though no sound consensus has been achieved with regard to methods.

We feel that the IDRC, in cooperation with other convinced institutions, should attempt to mobilize decision-makers, donors, researchers and society through meetings, round tables or seminars focusing on the question of "how to involve social policy research and research findings in the formulation, development and implementation of development policies".

After the seminar, it would be advisable to undertake a process of consultation in each country involving the government, NGOs, the people, research institutions and researchers to:

- Conduct a briefing on the resolutions emanating from the seminar;



- Mechanisms for development and cooperation between national organizations;
- The formulation of a national social policy research thrust (priorities, programs and planning);
- The organization of social policy research drawing on technical science techniques;
- The incorporation of social policy research in the development of sectoral policies.

This initiative will be facilitated by the Coordinator/Facilitator in each country and the Regional Coordinator of the Social Policy Network.

## 6 - **PROPOSAL FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTITUTIONS**

In light of the importance of the issue, there is an urgent requirement for a research and information project to:

- Carry out a census of researchers or update existing data on social policy researchers;
- Establish a national organization in each country to formulate criteria for awarding the title of researcher;
- Indicate important references for each country and sector;
- An expanded process of consultation to determine researchers' technical, methodological, institutional and information requirements;
- Assigning priority to action designed to make researchers more operational and productive by means of training, methodology, retraining, upgrading, etc.

- The establishment of an Advisory Committee on Orientation of Social Policy Research in each country, chaired by the network Coordinator/Facilitator.

Another important aspect would be to select two or three specialized research institutions in the West and Central African region on the basis of the research carried out by G Neill and S Ouattara. These institutions would be given a mission to cooperate with and support national teams and organizations on the basis of clear, precise contracts. CERPOD already plays an important role in this context.

In addition, three or four national institutions should be selected with a mandate to develop research on issues of general interest and participate in exchanges.

In all cases, in the interests of greater pragmatism, it will be necessary to develop concrete proposals, on the strength of which an operational mechanism for reinvigorating the research field can be put in place.

## CONCLUSION

The countries of West and Central Africa have reached an extremely critical stage in their evolution, crushed under the weight of an accumulation of negative factors: galloping population growth, an unsustainable debt load resulting from ill-conceived economic policies; growing impoverishment of their people, with multiple consequences and the risk of explosion at any moment.

**The working masses, who have for too long been muzzled and misled, are striving to improve their living standards and are determined not to remain "the disinherited". They are forcefully demanding more freedom, justice and democracy. Even more forcefully**

**they are demanding more food, education, information and health care; in short, a level of well-being which seems daily to recede a little farther from their grasp.**

The situation cries out for decision-makers, politicians, governments, donor or multilateral and bilateral aid institutions and researchers to display commitment and cooperation in their actions and management.

The challenge is enormous for planners and decision-makers in these countries to achieve an enhanced perception of the need to incorporate social policies alongside other government policies, notwithstanding their differences in terms of formulation and implementation of social policies, by taking account specifically of the negative impact of socioeconomic factors in promoting human development.

It is vital and urgent that mechanisms be established for cooperation, exchange, upgrading and utilization of the assets of various countries. This strategy incorporates the reinforcement of the capabilities of social policy research institutions; the establishment of a platform for consultation and exchange, vigorous intervention in the process of formulating, planning and implementing social policies; hence the involvement of researchers, but above all of society: for the future of balanced development depends on our ability to integrate social and political policy.

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